

MINUTES  
BOARD OF SELECTMEN  
MONDAY, DECEMBER 18, 2006  
REGULAR SESSION  
SELECTMEN'S MEETING ROOM, TOWN HALL  
6:00PM

I. CALL TO ORDER

A regular meeting of the Board was called to order in open session at 6:00 PM in the Selectmen's Meeting Room at Town Hall. All members were present. Town Administrator Tom Younger and Assistant Town Administrator Jeff Conti were also present.

II. QUESTIONS FROM TOWN RESIDENTS

Mario Rathle noted an accident that occurred at the intersection of School Street and Fairview Avenue and asked what the Town can do about this intersection. Mr. Rathle suggested a raised intersection as a traffic calming measure.

The Board moved: To refer the matter to the Community Development Director to study if the intersection warrants a four-way stop with flashing red lights in both directions, and to ask the Director to speak with Mr. Rathle about his suggestion.

Motion carried unanimously (3-0).

III. ACTION BY APPOINTMENT

Mr. Younger reviewed the progress of the police chief selection process to date. The MMA Consulting Group was hired to conduct a candidate search and run an assessment center. The position was widely advertised. The consultant, along with Mr. Younger and Human Resources Director Diane Crimmins reviewed the applications and narrowed the field to about 14 candidates, then 8 candidates, then 4 candidates to go through the assessment center. All 4 candidates did well enough in the assessment center that it was decided to submit all four candidates for the Board to interview.

Police Chief Interview-Lt. Chris Donahue, Belmont Police Department

Lt. Chris Donahue appeared before the Board and reviewed his background. He is a lifelong Belmont resident and has served with the BPD for ten years. He was asked about managing people that were formally his colleagues, and he said he believes he has the respect of everyone in the department. Lt. Donahue said he believes traffic is one of the biggest issues the department is facing and that talking to the public more is the way to start solving the problems. He would also transfer three officers from a patrol function to a primary traffic function in order to address traffic issues. Drugs, alcohol and school violence are also important and parents need to be involved on those issues.

He was asked about how to handle a complaint about rude treatment by an officer from a citizen. He said that the department has policies in place to investigate complaints and that having such a policy improves morale.

Lt. Donahue said BPD needs to have a mission and goals and objectives that derive from that mission. He believes that closer cooperation between officers and members of the community is a key element. He would like to institute some performance measures to reward officers who are doing good things.

In response to a bias or discrimination complaint, Lt. Donahue said it is necessary to address the perception of racial motivation regardless of whether it is really present, and that will require more education for officers.

The Board asked about turnover in the department and how to address it. Lt. Donahue said it is a morale issue and that when officers feel they have an ownership interest in the community they will want to stay.

Lt. Donahue stressed proactive communication with unions on issues such as budget cuts. He mentioned that he welcomes the idea of zero-based budgeting and involving the public in deciding what services are most important - they are the customers. He said he is not in favor of regionalization of police services because the residents would see a decline in service.

When asked what is his unique strength vs. other candidates, Lt. Donahue said he knows the department and he knows the officers. He also has the financial experience from his work in the accounting field to manage budgets and analyze costs.

#### Police Chief Interview-Lt. Edward Nolan, North Reading Police Department

Lt. Nolan appeared before the Board. He has 38 years of police experience and feels that his problem solving ability is one of his key strengths. He has served on the Attorney General's panel on hate and bias crimes, and has been the lead trainer for Massachusetts' DARE program. He has developed budgets in his capacity as Executive Officer in North Reading.

Lt. Nolan said one of his first priorities as someone without a direct Belmont connection would be to familiarize himself with the records of the officers and meet with each officer individually to become more personally familiar with them.

Lt. Nolan said communication is critical to maintaining morale and that information has to flow down as well as up. Also, leadership must be consistent in how rules and regulations are applied. Officers need to feel that they have opportunities to achieve their career goals, and leadership needs to work with them to help them do so.

Lt. Nolan explained that if hired he would continue to commute from his home in New Hampshire.

He stressed school violence as an area of concern and one that he has experience dealing with as head of a regional police council. He also cited drugs as a major concern and his experience on task forces addressing drug problems.

When asked about how to handle a complaint about rude treatment by an officer from a citizen, Lt. Nolan said he would hear both sides of the story and pursue a full investigation. Officers need to know that they represent the department and the community at large with all of their actions.

Asked about turnover in the department and how to address it, Lt. Nolan stressed the importance of exit interviews to learn people's reasons for leaving and of career development and training opportunities for officers.

Regarding the DARE program, Lt. Nolan said the educational value of the program is secondary to the value of bringing police officers into the schools and allowing young people to establish a positive relationship with them.

In response to a bias or discrimination complaint, Lt. Nolan said his PhD. was on the lack of training in cultural diversity among police. Complaints that are substantiated need to be addressed quickly. Additional training may be necessary and an atmosphere of zero tolerance for even small transgressions in this area.

On union issues, Lt. Nolan noted that North Reading patrol officers are in the Teamsters which is a strong union. He has handled grievance issues for the NRPD and strongly believes that many issues can be dealt with before it reaches the stage of a grievance. In North Reading he helped to develop a joint labor management committee which met on a regular basis to discuss issues and the number of grievances declined.

On budget issues, Lt. Nolan talked about performance incentives in police contracts. He noted that dispatch is a million dollar budget item in Belmont and Essex County is regionalizing that function now, but he feels police patrol services are not likely to be regionalized.

Lt. Nolan stressed that his unique strength is his years of experience and his background of work training police in departments all over the country and working with diverse communities.

#### Police Chief Interview-Capt. Richard McLaughlin, Arlington Police Department

Captain McLaughlin appeared before the Board and reviewed his background. He has been a Belmont resident for 21 years. He has been with the Arlington PD for 27 years.

He said that coming in from the outside allows him to be objective in evaluating the department although he does know many of the officers. He feels traffic is a major issue and cited the example of the railroad tunnel where some lane markings and arrows could help alleviate driver confusion. Drug and alcohol issues are also very important and need to be addressed as a community working together to resolve them.

Captain McLaughlin said as a leader you have to set an example for others to follow. He believes in giving his leadership team responsibility to get things done and not micro-managing them.

When asked about how to handle a complaint about rude treatment by an officer from a citizen, Captain McLaughlin said he would investigate and consider whether there is any history with the officer of prior incidents, as well as setting clear standards for how officers should conduct themselves as professionals.

Asked about turnover in the department and how to address it, he said he would like to do an internal survey and an external survey to find out what both officers and citizens expect from their PD and where they want it to go.

On regionalization, Captain McLaughlin talked about NEMLEC and the ability it provides to direct a lot of resources that Belmont doesn't have to the Town in a crisis. He said that there have been efforts to look at regionalization of detention facilities as a cost-saving measure.

Captain McLaughlin noted that the Municipal Light Department is a great vehicle for communicating messages to the public. On union issues, he believes that open communication can minimize issues before they become major problems.

On substance abuse issues, Captain McLaughlin acknowledged that it is impossible to eliminate them altogether but through community action they can be minimized. In response to a bias or discrimination complaint, he said the response would depend on the specific circumstances of the incident.

Asked how he would deal with requests for special personal consideration, Captain McLaughlin said the law has to be enforced in a fair and impartial manner.

Captain McLaughlin said his unique strength as a candidate is his involvement in the community as a resident and his personal commitment to the future of the Town as a result.

#### Police Chief Interview-Lt. Richard Manning-Waltham Police Department

Lt. Manning appeared before the Board. He grew up in Belmont and is a Belmont High graduate. He has been a supervisor in all 5 divisions of the Waltham PD and commands the Suburban Middlesex Drug Task Force.

Lt. Manning said Belmont's public safety issues are similar to other communities in Massachusetts. Planning, proactive efforts and injecting officers into the community, and progressive efforts to stay on top of technology are the keys to addressing these issues.

He said leadership is not inherent but learned, and comes from experience. He has commanded units in high stress situations and has learned to give direction to others.

Lt. Manning said many police departments have a perception that morale is low. He feels morale is really an individual motivation issue. Leadership needs to set goals and a standard of conduct but ultimately it is a personal choice of how to approach their job.

When asked about how to handle a complaint about rude treatment by an officer from a citizen, Lt. Manning said it should be handled by front line supervisors and documented. This will show if an officer has repeat incidents of this nature and whether there is a systemic problem throughout the department. This will help inform whether to address the problem through training and/or discipline.

On turnover, Lt. Manning said sometimes it is an issue of expectations of young officers not being met. There need to be incentive programs and exit interviews to spot trends among officers that are leaving.

On budget issues, Lt. Manning talked about resource integration to cover multiple functions and creative kinds of non-monetary incentives for officers. He said regionalization is an opportunity and is already beginning. It can offer budget, manpower, expertise, and career development benefits. He said regionalizing 911 is worth looking into because the foundation is already in place, but the trade-off is losing local control.

On substance abuse, Lt. Manning said the key is to have a school resource officer and to participate in the drug task force. Methamphetamine is on the rise elsewhere in the country and will be a huge issue if it comes here, so Belmont needs to be prepared to deal with it. Lt. Manning noted he has had budgetary responsibility for units he has commanded. In response to a bias or discrimination complaint, he said it must be investigated and even if it is not a valid complaint, a dialogue with the complainant can help to address the perceptions of the department. Awareness of diversity issues is a valuable training tool for police officers.

Lt. Manning said his unique strength as a candidate is his leadership experience and his vision of preparedness, proactive and progressive police services. His SWAT team experience also helps prepare him for any situation he may have to face. He has credibility as a street cop and the education and professional experience to manage the dept.

The Board praised Mr. Younger for managing the selection process that produced four excellent candidates and that all involved seemed to appreciate.

The Board reviewed and discussed the performance of the candidates in the assessment center. The Board then proceeded to consider the candidates' relative strengths in the categories of experience, community knowledge, leadership skills, administrative skills, and personal skills.

The Board expressed concern about Lt. Nolan's desire to retain his residence in New Hampshire some 50 miles away. The Board felt this practically made his candidacy troublesome despite his other obvious strengths and agreed to eliminate him from consideration.

The Board noted that the selection of any candidate will be conditional upon successfully passing a background check.

The majority of the Board felt that Captain McLaughlin did not come across as well in his interview as the others in answering the Board's questions and displaying the skills to represent the Department to the community in a formal setting.

The Board acknowledged that two of the Selectmen had personally interacted with Lt. Donahue in situations where his professionalism was displayed in a difficult situation.

The Board moved: To appoint Lt. Chris Donahue as Chief of the Belmont Police Department, subject to the appropriate background check and contract negotiations.

Motion carried unanimously (3-0).

The Board felt that the process gave great legitimacy to Lt. Donahue's promotion.

#### IV. ACTION BY CONSENT

A. Application for License and Permits - Renewals  
Common Victualler Licenses  
Brothers Pizza and Grille, 121 Trapelo Road  
Ling Garden Restaurant, Inc., 63 White Street  
Paleo, Inc. d/b/a Michael's Pizza , 191 Belmont Street  
New Asia In Belmont, 93 Trapelo Road  
Shangri-La, Inc., 149 Belmont Street  
Teddy's Kitchen, 462 Common Street  
Adriano Medeiros d/b/a Thyagos' Pizza, 368 Trapelo Road

Agent's or Seller's License-Class I  
Cityside Subaru, Inc., 790 Pleasant Street

The Board moved: To approve all the licenses.

Motion carried unanimously (3-0).

#### Town Administrator's Report

Mr. Younger reported that MassHighway and the construction firm would like to continue work on the Pleasant Street reconstruction project during December and January.

The Board moved: To authorize the continuation of work on the Pleasant Street reconstruction project during December and January.

Motion carried unanimously (3-0).

Mr. Younger said that directional signage on Concord Avenue is being reviewed. Also, the new regulations for median signage are working very well.

#### V. OTHER

Selectman Firenze reported a meeting with the Belmont Country Club at which the details of the Woodfall Road agreement were ironed out. The developer will now have to pay the club to compensate for landscape improvements of about \$50,000. It will be known soon whether the

traffic light will be required as a condition of the sale. The end of January is the target date to close on the deal.

Selectman Firenze also met with the headmaster of the Belmont Hill School on the issue of compensation or Payment In Lieu of Taxes (PILOT) for acquired land that is coming off the tax rolls. The school is committed to being a good neighbor and has not ruled out a PILOT but talked about other ways for them to compensate the community, such as mutual use of facilities like the boathouse, or enrichment programs that could be opened up to Belmont High students. The typical PILOT is about 25% of the value lost in taxes.

Mr. Conti pointed out that taking the property off the tax rolls has a multi-year impact, so any alternative compensation should also have a multi-year impact and be codified in a way that would not be easily revoked in future years.

Chairman Solomon wished his colleagues a happy holiday season.

The Board adjourned at 10:13 PM.

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Thomas G. Younger, Town Administrator